

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4544

INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

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AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BELGRADE 5643

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR YO UR

SUBJ: NEW STRAINS IN SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS

1. SUMMARY: YUGOSLAV CONVICTION THAT SOVIETS ARE INVOLVED
IN SUBVERSIVE COMINFORMIST ACTIVITIES HERE HAS PUT NEW STRAINS
ON THEIR ALWAYS UNEASY RELATIONSHIP. THEIR LARGER CONCERN
IS NOT WITH RELATIVELY INSIGNIFICANT AND AGAIN COMINFORMISTS
PER SE, BUT WITH SOVIET MEDDLING AT A TIME WHEN OTHER, MORE
NUMEROUS AND POWERFUL CONSERVATIVE FORCES MAY RE-EMERGE IN
THE FACE OF DOMESTIC ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. TITO HAS REACTED
WITH WIDESPREAD ARRESTS OF COMINFORMISTS, WITH SERIES OF ANTY-
DOGMATIST AND THUS ANTI-SOVIET SPEECHES
BY MAJOR LEADERS AND WITH NEW ECONOMIC DRIVE. (SEE
SEPTELS ON ECONOMY.) END SUMMARY.

2. IN THE CONSTANT OSCILLATIONS OF YUGOSLAV INTERNAL-EXTERNAL
POLICY BETWEEN AN ANTI-LIBERAL, ANTI-WESTERN AND
ANTI-DOGMATIST, ANTI-SOVIET STANCE, WE SEEM NOW TO BE
WITNESSING TRANSITION FROM THE 1971-75 PERIOD WHEN
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EMPHASIS PLACED ON TECHNOCRATIC-WESTERNIZING FORCES

AS MAIN DANGER TO COMPLEX YUGOSLAV BALANCE OF CENTRALIST-DECENTRALIST POLICIES INTO ERA WHEN DOGMATIST-CENTRALIST FORCES ARE PORTRAYED AS MAJOR THREAT. AT SAME TIME US-YUGOSLAV RELATIONSHIP IS CONSIDERABLY IMPROVED, WHILE SOVIET-YUGOSLAV RELATIONS APPEAR TO BE COOLING.

3. MOST DRAMATIC CURRENT EVIDENCE OF THIS TURNING POINT IS SPEECH BY VICE PRESIDENT VLADIMAR BAKARIC OCT 21. SPEAKING IN WAKE OF LCY PRESIDENCY MEETING PRESIDED OVER BY TITO, HE STRESSES NEED TO STRENGTHEN UNITY OF LCY AND DIRECTS SPECIAL ATTENTION TO "FOREIGN INFLUENCE ON THE LCY ITSELF AND PARTICULARLY ITS MEMBERSHIP". BAKARIC ATTACKS THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE YUGOSLAVIA "JOIN ALL ORGANIZATIONS FROM THE WARSAW PACT TO CEMA". WHILE NOTING CONTINUING DANGER PRESENTED BY PRAXISTS, TECHNOCRATS AND OTHER FORCES, HE STRESSES THAT RECENTLY THE COMINFORMIST "TENDENCY HAS BEEN GAINING STRENGTH...SEVERAL ATTEMPTS AT ORGANIZATION HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED." THAT THIS CONSIDERED MAJOR DANGER NOW IS CONFIRMED BY "BORBA" EDITORIAL OCT 23 WHICH STATES: "THESE DAYS WE ARE PARTICULARLY WARNED ABOUT COMINFORMISTS AND NEO-COMINFORMISTS WHOSE ESSENCE AND POLITICAL LINE IS STATE SOCIALISM AND JOINING THE CAMP." (WORD "CAMP" FOR YUGOSLAVS IS REDOLENT OF BARBWIRES AND CONCENTRATION CAMPS, IS RARELY USED AND ITS MENTION ALONG WITH THE NOW FREQUENTLY SEEN WORD "TRAITOR" INDICATES DEGREE OF EMOTION AND CONCERN WHICH HAS BEEN GENERATED.)

4. IMMEDIATE OBJECT OF THIS CAMPAIGN IS RELATIVELY SMALL GROUP OF COMINFORMISTS WHO HAVE BEEN OUT OF POWER SINCE 1949, WHO HAVE LARGELED FAILED TO ATTRACT YOUNGER GENERATION AND THUS WHO BY THEMSELVES PRESENT LITTLE THREAT TO REGIME. IN ADDITION TO PREVIOUSLY REPORTED RUMORS ABOUT ANNOUNCEMENT OF MAJOR COMINFORMIST TRAIL IN NEAR FUTURE, SAWPY SOURCE CLAIMS THERE WILL BE TWO MAJOR BUT CLOSED TRIALS WITH VERDICTS PUBLICALLY ANNOUNCED. WE HAVE HEARD FROM ANOTHER YUGOSLAV THAT SOME INDIVIDUAL TRIALS AND SENTENCING ALREADY UNDERWAY
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AND THAT BETWEEN JULY AND SEPTEMBER: 20 ARRESTED IN MONTENEGRE, 40 IN BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA, 20 IN CROATIA, 30 IN VOJVODINA, NONE IN SLOVENIA. THEY ARE, WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION VOJVODINA GROUP, SUPPOSED TO BE ALMOST ENTIRELY AGING PRE-'48 GROUP. THUS REPORTED SENTENCES OF 10, 15, 18 YEARS WITH PROVISION FOR

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AMNESTY ONLY FROM SFRY PRESIDENCY PRACTICALLY ENDS
THEIR POLITICAL LIFE.

5. BUT AS YUGOSLAVS HAVE POINTED OUT, COMINFORMISTS THEMSELVES ARE ONLY A THREAT IF THEY STIMULATE AND JOIN TOGETHER WITH MUCH LARGER NUMBER OF THOSE WHO ARE NOT NECESSARILY PRO-SOVIET BUT WHO IN FACE OF ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES ADVOCATE MOVE AWAY FROM PRESENT CAREFUL BALANCE OF CENTRALIST AND DECENTRALIST ELEMENTS TO MORE STATE CONTROLLED ECONOMY AND MORE REGIMENTED AND CENTRALIZED POLITICAL SYSTEM. THIS GROUP INCLUDES RANKOVICI AND OTHER CONSERVATIVES KEPT OUT OF POWER FOR A DECADE, BUT IT ALSO CLEARLY INCLUDES THOSE NOW IN LCY AND IS PROBABLY PARTICULARLY STRONG AMONG SERBS AND MONTENEGRINS. AS BAKARIC SAID "IN THE PAST FEW YEARS...IN ONE PART OF THE PARTY'S MEMBERSHIP THE LINE BETWEEN US AND THEM (COMINFORMISTS) WAS NOT PERCEIVED."

6. MAIN LINE OF CRITICS'S ATTACK, AS DESCRIBED IN

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OCT 23 SPEECH BY SAWPY PRESIDENT DUSHAN PETROVIC,
IS CHARACTERIZATION OF "PASSING ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES
AS A CRISIS OF THE SYSTEM". SUCH CRITICISM FALLING
ON FERTILE GROUND OF PUBLIC CONCERN OVER HIGH INFLATION
RATE, NEGATIVE GROWTH IN REAL WAGES IN 1975 AND
DIFFICULT EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS FOR 1976.

7. TITO AND OTHER YUGOSLAV LEADERS CLEARLY CONSCIOUS
OF DILEMMA THEY CONFRONT--OF NEED TO GET GREATER POLITICAL
AND ECONOMIC DISCIPLINE WITHOUT LOSING BOTH APPEARANCE
AND REALITY OF CAREFULLY CONSTRUCTED AND DELICATE "SELF-
MANAGEMENT" SYSTEM. ACCORDING TO PREVIOUSLY RELIABLE
YUGOSLAV SOURCE WITH GOOD ACCESS, AT LCY PRESIDENCY
MEETING TITO SAID HE WOULD NOT RESORT TO OR PERMIT
REPRESSION, SAYING SOME WANT TO PUT SECURITY PEOPLE BACK
IN THE SADDLE BUT HE WOULD NOT DO THIS EVEN TO FIGHT
THE CONSERVATIVES THEMSELVES. HIS STRATEGY APPEARS
TO BE A VIGOROUS ATTACK ON THE CONSERVATIVES WHILE
(A) NOW FOCUSING THE LCY'S POWER ON MAKING THE PRESENT
ECONOMIC SYSTEM WORK AND COULD CONCEIVABLY, IF DIFFICULTIES
PERSIST, INVOLVE (B) USING EXISTING FEDERAL-LEVEL ORGANS
(E.G., SDK, NATIONAL BANK, SECRETARIAT FOR MARKETS AND
PRICES) MORE EXTENSIVELY IN ECONOMIC CONTROL FUNCTIONS.

8. OUR OWN ESTIMATE IS THAT TITO WILL PROBABLY SUCCEED
IN COPING AS HE HAS MANY TIMES IN THE PAST. WHILE
YUGOSLAVIA IS PASSING THROUGH SOME HEAVY WEATHER AND
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS HERE HAVE SHARP POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS,
THEIR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ARE NO MORE SEVERE THAN MOST
OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND THEIR TRACK RECORD IS GOOD.
THUS THE MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NEW TURN IN YUGOSLAV
POLITICS MAY BE FOR THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION.
IN RECENT DAYS, MY AMBASSADORIAL COLLEAGUES AND MANY
YUGOSLAVS CAN TALK OF NOTHING ELSE.

9. THE GOY APPARENTLY HAS EVIDENCE OF SOVIET INVOLVEMENT
IN THE COMINFORMIST GROUPS NOW UNDER ARREST. THUS
BREZHNEV'S REPORTED EXEMPTION OF YUGOSLAVIA FROM HIS
DOCTRINE DURING TRIP TO BELGRADE IN 1971 AND SOVIET
ASSURANCES OF NON-INVOLVEMENT IN THE BAR GROUP OF
COMINFORMISTS TO KARDELJ DURING HIS TRIP TO MOSCOW IN
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1974 ARE REVEALED FOR WHAT THEY WERE. AS SOVIET EMBASSY
COUNSELOR SIDELNIKOV REMARKED TO POLCOUNS OCT 24
IN TONE OF HURT INNOCENCE "YUGOSLAVS DO NOT SEEM TO

TRUST US ANY MORE."

10. HOWEVER, JUDGING BY PAST CYCLES YUGOSLAVS THEMSELVES
ARE EXTREMELY UNLIKELY TO PUSH ANTI-SOVIET DRIVE TOO
FAR. THEY WILL CONTINUE TO TEMPER IT WITH CRITICISM
OF WESTERN SUBVERSION, DOMESTIC LIBERALS, POSSIBLY
EVEN SOME CHETNIK OR USTASHI TRIALS. SO WHILE WE ENJOY
THE SOVIETS DISCOMFITURE, WE MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT OF
THE YUGOSLAVS' PERCEIVED NEED FOR BALANCE.
COMMENT: IT'S CONCEIVABLE THAT THE YUGOSLAVS ARE
EXAGGERATING THE THREAT OR ACTUALITY OF DIRECT SOVIET
INTERVENTION FOR THEIR OWN INTERNAL POLITICAL PURPOSES
BUT I AM INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS ARE FISHING
UP TO THEIR ARMPITS.

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